

# The Way to Get Rid of Cannonism is to Get Rid of Cannon

Following is one plank from the democratic national platform:

The house of representatives was designed by the fathers of the constitution to be the popular branch of our government, responsive to the public will.

The house of representatives, as controlled in recent years by the republican party, has ceased to be a deliberate and legislative body, responsive to the will of a majority of its members, but has come under the absolute domination of the speaker, who has entire control of its deliberations, and powers of legislation.

We have observed with amazement the popular branch of our federal government helpless to obtain either the consideration or enactment of measures desired by a majority of its members.

Legislative government becomes a failure when one member, in the person of the speaker, is more powerful than the entire body.

We demand that the house of representatives shall again become a deliberate body, controlled by a majority of the people's representatives and not by the speaker, and we pledge ourselves to adopt such rules and regulations of its members to direct its deliberations and control legislation.

## THE SHADOW OF JOE CANNON

Following are extracts from an editorial that appeared in the July 16, 1908, issue of the Odebolt (Ia.) Chronicle (Rep.):

"Is Joe Cannon to be conceded the speakership in the event of the republicans carrying the house at the coming election?"

"This is a pertinent question. Upon the reply, or failure to reply, hang enough votes to determine the election of a president.

"Let us treat Cannon charitably, if you will, as charitably as his best friends would treat him, and what must be said of him?"

"He is the most inveterate foe of Roosevelt policies in public life; and no man in either house is so detested by republicans who have followed Roosevelt's leadership and who supported Taft for nomination because they looked to him to carry on the work begun by Roosevelt.

"What happened during the last session of congress? Under an abominable system which began with Tom Reed, and was later reduced to a science by Cannon, the speaker of the house played the part of an autocrat. Nero's fiat was never more absolute than Cannon's decision for or against legislation. When Roosevelt recommended legislation with the approval of nine-tenths of the voters of this country Cannon tilted his cigar and tersely announced that he opposed it and therefore it could not be considered. When it was absolutely certain that a majority of the members of both parties in the house and senate desired the passage of a bill abolishing duties on wood pulp and printing paper, Cannon and his creatures on the committee on rules—the republican nominee for vice president among them—defiantly announced that they cared nothing for the opinion of the public; that no measure affecting a schedule of the Dingley bill should come to vote—and none did.

"Everyone knows that Cannon tied the hands of the president and defeated every reform measure proposed at the last session of congress."

## A CONGRESSMAN'S FIRST SPEECH

The August number of the American Magazine prints an article entitled "A Congressman's First Speech." This article was written by Victor Murdock, republican representative in congress from the Eighth Kansas district. An introductory to the Murdock article is written by Mr. Murdock's friend, William Allen White. Mr. White's article throws a strong light upon Cannonism. Mr. White's article follows:

Victor Murdock went to congress in his early thirties, five years ago, determined to be a free man. His first public act of any importance was to bring to the attention of congress the fact that the American railroads were getting five million dollars a year from the government by a false system of railroad mail weighing. Congress refused to act. Murdock, who

and departmental silence we have paid the railroads on miscalculations sixty million dollars. Still congress refuses to adopt business methods in dealing with the railroads."

## CANNON AND CANNONISM

The following editorial appeared in Collier's Weekly of September 5:

From the Danville district of Illinois will come returns which the whole country will scan eagerly on the night of November 3. Will there come the news of a great victory for progress and intelligence, or the old story of habit, local pull, and stupid ruts? "In Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois," writes William Hard, "the United States now possesses the most stationary political object ever exhibited within its boundaries." The speaker observed the movement for pure food and clean meat with disgust. He was hostile to Senator LaFollette's bill endeavoring to give a more human life to railway employees. He was a bitter defender of the spoils system, and no idea of modern morality in politics has ever penetrated his obdurate intellect. He fought the resumption of specie payments formerly, as he fights the Appalachian bill today. In small and big things it is the same. He fought the great and immeasurably valuable reclamation bill, as he fights any decent bit of architecture or any little public park.

This is the speaker who appoints as chairman of the public lands committee a man who is eager to help all individuals and corporations exploit those lands. It matters not what it may be: all improvements look equally bad to him. He packs committees against them and thus buries them. Is it not a disgrace to a so-called self-governing nation, which wishes to be intelligent and free, which wishes to progress, that a thick-skulled old politician should be able to say "No!" to the best and strongest purposes of the nation? If we were offered the privilege of eliminating Aldrich, Rockefeller, or Cannon from influence in America, without hesitation we should choose Cannon as the most dangerous of the three.

If only the men of Danville would vote as independent human beings, and not respond, sheeplike and docile, to the habits of the party and the district! We fear Mr. Cannon will be re-elected, and yet, when we remember the disgraceful way in which a venal Illinois legislature passed the Allen bill for the benefit of Yerkes, and the hold on the Danville council, which enabled the Cannon brothers to seize part of the public pie before that scandalous law could be repealed, we almost believe the new wave of political enlightenment may strike Danville, and cause a glorious victory for the onward march.

was refused the right to vote on the subject, appealed from the decision of the chair to the house; he was the only republican who stood up to be counted. The steal—which was open and palpable—was so gross that the president, after waiting in vain for congress to act on Murdock's proposition, abolished the rule under which the steal was made the day that congress adjourned. Murdock thus incurred the enmity of the house organization, but he found favor with the president. Last spring Murdock led the fight for a detailed consideration of the postal appropriation bill in the house. He said in the course of his speech:

"This bill carries two hundred millions. There are twenty minutes allowed for its analysis. That is deliberation at the rate of ten millions a minute." Mr. Murdock then denounced the extravagance of congress in dealing with the railroads.

"During the past thirty-four years," he asserted, "by reason of congressional blindness

and departmental silence we have paid the railroads on miscalculations sixty million dollars. Still congress refuses to adopt business methods in dealing with the railroads."

This angered the organization again. Murdock also stood against the "organization" in its attempt to garrot the democratic minority. Three times the clerk called Murdock's name when this rule came to a vote, and three times did Murdock—the only republican—reply "no." He could not be bulldozed, and when signatures were needed to a petition to the republican caucus for an insurgent movement, Murdock's name always went down.

## THE GREAT OBSTRUCTOR

The Chicago Tribune (rep.) during the recent session of congress printed this editorial: "The people of Illinois are loath to credit the report from Washington that Speaker Cannon gratuitously is playing the role of the Great Obstructor. As speaker of the house it is to be presumed that his first obligation is to the public and that he should respond to the wishes of the majority of the house and especially to the wishes of the majority of his own party. Is it true that he was opposed to an adequate appropriation for the interstate commerce commission? Is it true that he approves the emasculation of the secret service which will make it impossible for the government to continue its prosecution of land thieves and its investigations of violations of the Sherman law? Is it true that he opposes personally the president's recommendation for the repeal of the tariff on wood pulp and paper? The action of the house will make plain the role of the speaker. The legislation passed at this session will indicate clearly whether he is alive to the interests of his constituents or has permitted himself to be hypnotized by those enemies of the president whose chief purpose is to defeat legislation recommended by him."

But don't forget that the speaker would have to respond to the wishes of the republican majority in the house if the republican members were not willing that the obstruction tactics should be continued or were too cowardly to register their protest. It will be remembered that John Sharp Williams asked for only thirty republicans to step out and join with the democrats in doing service for the people, but the thirty were not forthcoming. Hold the speaker responsible for his sins, but don't forget that the republican party is responsible also.

## DICTATES LEGISLATION

Honorable L. White Busby is the private secretary of Speaker Cannon. In a magazine article, discussing the powers of the speaker, Mr. Busby relates the circumstances of a bill having been prepared, and three-fourths of the members of the house having signed a request to the speaker, asking that the rules committee, of which he is chairman, bring in a special rule for the consideration of the bill. The speaker refused the request. The chairman of the committee pleaded and urged. Continuing, Mr. Busby says:

"As a final stroke the chairman said: 'Then, Mr. Speaker, this bill is to fail by the will of one man who is in the chair by votes. We have no redress from this one-man power.' 'Yes, you have,' replied the speaker. 'You have a way to pass your bill. You place me in the chair to shoulder the responsibility of the legislation here enacted. In my view, I can not assume the responsibility for this bill. You can elect a new speaker today and pass your bill if you can find one who will accept that responsibility; but if you leave me in the chair that bill will not become a law.'"—From Speech by Hon. John W. Kern.

## THE COMMONER FUND

On September 3 The Commoner sent to Treasurer Haskell of the democratic national committee a check for \$2,000, representing the profits of The Commoner from July 24, to September 1.

# The Way to Get Rid of Cannon is to Elect a Democratic House